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ABSTRACT

A study examined the relationship between older adults' motivations to participate in outdoor adventure experiences and their retirement status. Surveys of 782 adults over 55 years old participating in 72 outdoor adventure programs found that although there were several significant differences in motivation based on retirement status, the overall motivations were similar for all participants and included being involved in nature, being physically active, being involved in a learning atmosphere, being with a group of respectful peers with similar interests, becoming competent in the program area, and resting and relaxing. Findings suggest that older adults may be using outdoor adventure activities as a means to prepare emotionally for retirement or to aid in the transition into retirement. Program administrators should be cognizant of these motivations and design outdoor adventure programs for older adults to include a perspective on life, a sense of personal meaning in life, a sense of personal renewal, confidence and belief in self, and belief in the ability to make positive changes. Specific strategies may include: using the peer group as a support system; developing a social environment conducive to sharing thoughts and ideas; using staff who have life experience and knowledge of life transitions; allowing time for conversations and sharing; providing specific activities around life transitions, such as journals and guided discussions; and allowing time for reflection. (Contains 35 references) (TD)

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MOTIVATIONS OF ELDERHOSTEL PARTICIPANTS IN OUTDOOR ADVENTURE PROGRAMS: A LIFE CYCLE PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

The number of opportunities for older adults to participate in institutionally based outdoor adventure programs is steadily increasing. In a baseline study examining outdoor recreational programs in North America for adults over 50, 78% of the organizations surveyed (N = 179) offered some type of adventure experience as an option for this older population. The majority of the organizations surveyed (62%) began targeting this specific population during the 1990s, a notable increase from previous decades (Sugerman, 2000). Several factors have occurred that may explain the increase in opportunities for older adults to participate in outdoor adventure programs. Life expectancy has increased (Hooyman & Kiyak, 1993), the number of years that people are in retirement has increased (Krauss, 1997), individuals are living relatively healthy lives (McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick, 1999), and many individuals have the discretionary income to be able to participate in leisure activities (Moody, 1994). Many organizations are taking advantage of these factors and offering a variety of educational and recreational outdoor adventure experiences to older adults.

Sugerman's (2000) study resulted in two key findings: 1) a wide variety of program formats available to clients ranging from adventure activities as part of another prescribed activity (e.g., day hiking in order to bird watch) to extended wilderness trips (e.g., 10-day canoe trip on a white water river) and 2) a lack of formal research in the area of outdoor adventure experiences for older adults, specifically on the motivations of older adults to participate in this programming area. To address the finding concerning research, a second study (N=782) conducted by Sugerman (2001) used the Recreation Experience Preference (REP) Inventory (Driver, 1977, 1983) to investigate general motivations of older adults to participate in outdoor adventure experiences. Data from the study indicated that the most frequently reported motivations were: 1) being in a natural environment, 2) being physically active, 3) learning about outdoor skills and the environment, and 4) being in a group of people with similar interests. The data also indicated that there were significant differences in motivation according to gender, age grouping (i.e., < 65 years vs. > 65 years), and program format. According to the study, women rated nature, physical fitness, learning, and social security to be more significant motivations for participation in outdoor adventure experiences than did men. Of these four reasons, only nature and learning were rated significantly different by the age groupings. Individuals less than 65 years of age rated both reasons higher than those respondents 65 or older. Individuals participating in programs involving overnight camping rated risk taking, learning, nature, and escaping physical pressure to be more significant motivations for participation than individuals participating in programs involving no overnight camping. Meeting new people was rated as a more significant motivation for those individuals participating in programs involving no overnight camping.

This manuscript examines the motivations of older adults to participate in outdoor adventure experiences based on whether or not they are retired to determine the association of motivation and retirement status. A particular focus for the paper is to better inform providers of outdoor adventure programs for older adults about the specific motivations of participants based on their stage of life cycle development. Understanding these motivations may aid in conducting effective and appropriate outdoor adventure programs for this population. Examining these

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motivations may also supply further information concerning adjustment to retirement and the role that outdoor adventure programming may play in life transitions.

Life Cycle Perspective

A growing body of research exists that examines the relationship between leisure motivation and human development, specifically life cycle issues. According to life span developmental psychologists, "development is a life-long process beginning at conception and ending at death" (Honzik, 1984, p. 309). Development is viewed not only as a biological process that peaks at maturity, but also as a psychosocial process that continues throughout an individual's life span. The term *life cycle* is used to depict the underlying order of the human life course, the universal sequencing of stages of individuals' lives. Various theorists have described the life cycle in terms of cognitive development (Piaget, 1964), moral development (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983), psychosocial development (Erikson, 1959; Levinson, 1986), and chronological development (Levinson, 1986; Linden & Courtney, 1953). The chronological stage of *adult* refers to early and middle adulthood; later adulthood is usually referred to as *aging*. According to Kermis (1986), aging can occur on at least three dimensions: chronological aging, biological-physiological aging, and psychosocial aging. Chronological aging is a time-based dimension; all individuals age as time passes. Biological/physiological aging is the point at which biological development has ceased and deterioration begins. Psychosocial aging refers to the psychological and social development (rather than decline) of the individual.

Leisure researchers have been interested in individual motivations for engaging in leisure activities as a means to measure psychosocial aging. Beard and Ragheb (1983) examined leisure motivation and developed a tool to assess the psychological and sociological reasons for participation in leisure activities. Through a factor analysis, the researchers theorized four psychosocial motives related to leisure participation in adults: 1) intellectual, 2) social, 3) competence-mastery, and 4) stimulus-avoidance. Adults are motivated to engage in leisure activities involving the intellectual stimulation of learning, exploring, discovering, creating, and imagining. The social motivations of leisure participation include the need for friendship and interpersonal relationships, and the need for the esteem of others. The competence-mastery component is the extent to which individuals participate in leisure activities to achieve, master, challenge, and compete. Another motivation is the drive to escape and avoid over-stimulating life situations and instead to seek solitude, rest, and relaxation.

Other theorists believe the motivations of individuals to participate in leisure are related to the issues and tasks that they face during the different stages in the life cycle (Tinsley, Teaff, Colbs, & Kaufman, 1985). Older adults (45-65) tend not to be as interested as younger adults in the acquisition of material goods and job-related successes, but tend to be more interested in evaluating past accomplishments and maintaining dignity, respect, and control. As family responsibilities decrease and economic resources increase, leisure patterns tend to be less home and family centered. The transition into retirement can result in dramatic changes in life roles, economic resources, and social involvement. At this developmental stage, leisure may provide a means of social integration and new sources of personal meaning. Research specifically on the motivations of older adults to participate in leisure experiences indicated that key motivations for this population included: 1) affiliation with others (Henderson, 1981), 2) self-determination and perceived competence (Mobily, Lemke, Ostiguy, Woddard, Griffee, & Pickens, 1993), and 3) instrumental needs (survival and personal effectiveness) and expressive needs (meaning and purpose) (Adair & Mowsesian, 1993).

Another factor contributing to leisure participation may be the interest from the older individual's point of view in *successful aging*. Researchers define successful aging as a combination of elements including low probability of disease and disease-related disabilities, high cognitive and physical functioning, and active engagement (Leviton & Santoro Campanelli, 1980; Palmore, 1979; Rowe & Kahn, 1997).

The *disengagement, activity, and continuity theories* are most frequently cited to explain successful aging as they focus on the individual's relative adjustment to aging (Ragheb & Griffith, 1982). The disengagement theory assumes that as individuals age they gradually withdraw from social interactions, in expectation of the roles assigned to them by society. The link to successful aging is seen as the older adult successfully plays out these new roles. The process is beneficial both to the individual and to society as older people desire the separation in preparation for ultimate death and the disengagement is necessary in society to make room for younger generations (McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick, 1999).

In contrast, the activity theory maintains that successful aging depends on the ability of the individual to maintain social activity, not disengage from it. Individuals remain physically, socially, and mentally active, interacting with others from a variety of age groups. Through activity older adults are able to continue and take on new roles, which are self-selected rather than given to them by society (Ragheb & Griffith, 1982). The continuity theory holds that the relative degree of success in aging is "a function of personal style of adaptations and adjustment that [have] been developed over the course of one's life" (McGuire, Boyd, & Tedrick, 1999, p. 20). It is not society's expectations of disengagement or personal expectations of role development through activity that determine successful aging, but individual predisposition and situational opportunities.

METHOD

Respondents

Participants in the study (N = 782) were recruited from individuals enrolled in outdoor adventure programs through organizations associated with Elderhostel during the summer and fall of 2000. Elderhostel is a clearinghouse for organizations offering recreational and educational experiences to adults 55 and older (although spouses or adult companions younger than 55 may attend programs with the age-eligible participant). Experiences are typically administered through colleges, universities, and other educational institutions throughout the United States and Canada, typically take place during a six-day period, and typically include classes and field trips. The outdoor adventure programs are listed in the "Active Outdoor" category of the Elderhostel catalog and are described as "programs [that] vary from physically demanding activities such as rafting, camping, mountaineering, or ropes courses to lighter outdoor activities such as golfing, birding, nature photography and hiking" (Elderhostel, 2000, p. 137). Organizations appropriate for the study (N = 167) were selected from the Summer 2000 catalog based on two factors: 1) location in the United States and 2) whether or not the outdoor adventure program description matched the definition used in the study which was "an outdoor experience involving small groups of people participating in self-propelled activities such as hiking, canoeing, and cross country skiing" (Sugerman, 2000, p. 12).

Instrument

The instrument used in the study was the Recreation Experience Preference (REP) Inventory (Driver, 1977, 1983), a tool designed to "measure the extent to which specific experiences are desired and expected from leisure activities" (Driver, Tinsley, & Manfredo, 1991, p. 275). The REP Inventory consists of 21 general recreation experience preference *domains* (i.e., similar people), 42 *scales* within the domains that describe possible desired outcomes of a recreational experience (i.e., being with friends, being with similar people), and two *core statements* for each scale (84 total statements) to be used in empirical studies (i.e., to be with members of your group, to be with friends, to be with people who enjoy the same things you do, to be with people who have similar values) (Manfredo, Driver, & Tarrant, 1996). See Table 1 for a list of the scales and domains.

At least 50 empirical studies have been conducted to test the reliability and validity of the inventory (Driver, Tinsley, & Manfredo, 1991). Studies show that as long as the two core statements are used, the average inter-item correlation is .4 or greater and Cronbach's alpha

TABLE 1
Recreation Experience Preference (REP) Domains and Scales

Domain	Scale
Achievement/stimulation	Reinforcing Self Image
	Social Recognition
	Skill Development
	Competence Testing
	Excitement
Autonomy/leadership	Independence
	Autonomy
	Control/Power
Risk Taking	
Equipment	
Family Togetherness	
Similar People	Being with Friends
	Being with Similar People
New People	Meeting New People
	Observing Other People
Learning	General Learning
	Exploration
	Geography of Area
	Learn About Nature
Enjoy Nature	Scenery
	General Nature Experience
Introspection	Spiritual
	Introspection
Creativity	
Nostalgia	
Physical Fitness	
Physical Rest	
Escape Personal/Social Pressures	Tension Releaser
	Slow Down Mentally
	Escape Role Overloads
	Escape Daily Routine
Escape Physical Pressure	Tranquility
	Privacy
	Escape Crowds
	Escape Physical Stressors
Social Security	
Escape Family	
Teaching/Leading Others	Teaching/Sharing Skills
	Leading Others
Risk Reduction	Risk Moderation
	Risk Avoidance
Temperature	

exceeds .75 (Driver, Brown, & Peterson, 1991; Graefe, Ditton, Roggenbuck, & Schreyer, 1981; Manfredo, Driver, & Tarrant, 1996; Tinsley, Driver, & Kass , 1982). A meta-analysis by Manfredo, Driver, and Tarrant (1996) showed the "proposed factor structures provided a good fit for the data across response scale, instruction set, geographic location, and type of recreation area" (p. 197). The findings offered evidence supporting the reliability, and to some extent the construct validity of the REP item scales.

The survey instrument for this study consisted of the 84 core statements from the REP Inventory arranged randomly to avoid obvious repetition of concepts. A Likert Scale with six response alternatives ranging from "not important" to "extremely important" was given for each statement (Driver, Tinsley, & Manfredo, 1991). Respondents were instructed to read each statement and rate the level of importance for each statement based on their reasons for participating in the Elderhostel outdoor adventure program. The survey also contained demographic questions relating to gender, age, retirement status, marital status, educational background, and racial status. Two open-ended questions were included for participants to provide further information on their reasons for current participation as well as examples of their previous participation in outdoor adventure activities.

Data Collection

Packets containing the survey instrument, a letter with instructions from the researcher, and an introductory letter from the Elderhostel Vice President of Education were sent to the contact person of identified organizations (i.e., located in the United States and program descriptions matching the definition of "outdoor adventure experience" used in the study) one to two weeks prior to the beginning date of each program. The instrument was administered on the first day of each program to participants by the organizational contact person or an individual designated by the contact person. This process ensured consistency and determined motivations prior to the outdoor adventure experience. After participants completed the survey, the packet was returned to the researcher.

Return Rate

Out of the initial 167 programs, 47 were cancelled due to low enrollment or inclement weather. Return responses were received from 72 of the remaining 120 programs, indicating a 60% return rate. The total number of participant surveys returned from the 72 programs was 817. The number of responses per program varied, depending on program format, from seven to 36. It was decided to use only surveys that had at least 80% of the responses completed, reducing the total number to 782 (96% of the surveys completed). Nine surveys were returned from individuals younger than 50 (1.2% of the total population). Because of the small number, it was decided to keep these surveys in the study.

RESULTS

As a result of the significant effects of gender in participant motivation previously identified (Sugerman, 2001) the current analysis of motivation and skill development level used a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) controlling for gender. Table 2 outlines the descriptive statistics for the 21 domains for both groups based on retirement status (retired versus not retired). The multivariate effect for retirement status was significant, $F(21, 693) = 4.39$, $p = .001$. The percent of unexplained variance, as indexed by the Wilks' λ was 88%; thus retirement status explained 12% of the variance for participant motivation. According to the univariate analyses, individuals who were not retired rated four domains significantly higher as a motivation than individuals who were retired: 1) Escape Personal Pressure $F(1,713) = 27.85$, $p = .001$; 2) Escape Physical Pressure $F(1,713) = 10.00$, $p = .05$; 3) Nature $F(1,713) = 4.21$, $p = .05$ 4); Physical Rest $F(1,713) = 4.51$, $p = .05$. Individuals who were retired rated two domains significantly higher as a motivation than individuals who were not retired: 1) Introspection $F(1,713) = 7.27$, $p = .05$; 2) Nostalgia $F(1,713) = 3.74$, $p = .05$.

TABLE 2
Descriptive Statistics and Univariate ANOVAs of REP Domains for Retired and Not Retired Groups

Domain	Retired (n = 535)		Not Retired (n = 181)				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*p*	α
Nature	5.03	0.89	5.25	0.77	4.21	.041	.86
Physical Fitness	4.98	0.99	5.02	0.97	0.05	.831	.80
Learning	4.73	0.95	4.92	0.79	3.05	.081	.90
Social Security	3.78	1.46	3.89	1.44	0.02	.883	.83
Similar People	3.56	1.06	3.61	1.02	0.00	.983	.71
New People	3.40	1.06	3.45	1.01	.046	.829	.78
Achievement	3.18	1.05	3.36	1.02	2.21	.138	.89
Family Togetherness	2.94	1.82	2.62	1.68	1.38	.240	.85
Physical Rest	2.92	1.33	3.20	1.50	4.51	.034	.67
Nostalgia	2.89	1.41	2.67	1.42	3.74	.054	.68
Escape Personal	2.79	1.06	3.33	1.16	27.85	.000	.87
Creativity	2.52	1.31	2.77	1.39	3.21	.073	.73
Introspection	2.44	1.26	2.80	1.37	7.27	.007	.89
Autonomy	2.40	1.17	2.51	1.19	0.75	.385	.88
Temperature	2.36	1.43	2.24	1.39	1.23	.269	.80
Escape Physical	2.21	0.97	2.49	1.04	10.00	.002	.85
Risk Taking	2.14	1.21	2.27	1.17	1.69	.193	.79
Risk Reduction	2.06	0.99	2.08	0.95	0.08	.772	.77
Equipment	1.95	1.10	1.79	1.00	1.25	.265	.71
Teaching	1.74	0.81	1.66	0.71	0.18	.670	.83
Escape Family	1.47	1.00	1.50	1.05	0.01	.940	.90

DISCUSSION

The results indicated that although many similarities existed between the retired and not retired groups, some notable differences occurred based on retirement status. Both groups were motivated to be involved in nature, be physically active, be involved in a learning atmosphere, be in a group of respectful peers where they could meet people who had similar interests, become competent in the program area, and rest and relax. These findings support Beard and Ragheb's (1983) factor analysis on leisure motivations in adults. The Elderhostel participants were motivated by the intellectual stimulation of learning, exploring, and discovering. Their social motivations included the need for friendship and interpersonal relationships, and the need for the esteem of others. Their motivations concerning competence-mastery were seen by their desire to achieve, master skills, and challenge themselves. They were also motivated by the drive to escape and avoid over stimulating life situations and instead to seek solitude, rest, and relaxation. The results of the study also support the activity theory of aging. Research supports the relationship between activity and successful aging (Seigenthaler, 1996), with the caveat that the quality of the activity is most important as opposed to the frequency of activities (Hull, 1990). The value of activity is determined by its meaning to the individual. The individuals in the study were engaged in cognitive, physical, and social activities through participation in the outdoor adventure experience. Their motivations for participating in the program suggest that the activities had personal meaning to them.

Several significant differences in motivations were based on retirement status. Individuals who were not yet retired were more motivated to

be in nature, escape the physical and personal demands of daily life, and experience the tranquility of the wilderness than individuals who were retired. Those individuals who were retired were more motivated by the opportunity to reflect on their personal values, and to remember similar past experiences. This finding suggests that older adults may be using outdoor adventure activities as a means to emotionally prepare for retirement or to aid in the transition into retirement. The wilderness environment is conducive to escaping the physical and personal demands of daily life, thus allowing for the time and space to reflect and plan. Research on retirement adjustment indicates that successful adjustment is more likely to occur as a result of careful preparation for changes in the social structures of the individual (Kim & Moen, 2001). Participation in outdoor adventure experiences may provide the opportunity to gather thoughts, share ideas with others in a similar situation, and emotionally prepare for and cope with life cycle changes.

The idea that individuals may be participating in outdoor adventure experiences for specific reasons related to retirement is valuable information that can be used by program administrators and instructors to guide marketing, planning, and implementing programs. In order to provide high quality experiences, strategies must be developed that consider the meaning of the experience sought by participants. The study indicated that overall motivations were similar for all participants regardless of whether they were retired or not. Program administrators and instructors should be cognizant of these motivations and plan and implement programs so that these outcomes occur for all programs, regardless of retirement status (see Sugerman, 2001). In addition, intentional planning of courses to reflect the skills, ideals, and values important in retirement may provide a format that allows participants to focus on this period of transition. Intended outcomes of programs might include the following: 1) a sense of perspective on life, 2) a sense of personal meaning in life, 3) a sense of personal renewal, 4) confidence and belief in self, and 5) belief in the ability to make positive changes (Colorado Outward Bound, nd). Specific strategies used to reach the intended outcomes may include the following:

- Use of the peer group with similar issues as a support system
- Development of a social environment conducive to sharing thoughts and ideas
- Use of staff who have life experience and knowledge of life transitions
- A flexible course structure that allows time for conversations and sharing
- Program activities and challenge levels that allow for conversations and sharing
- Specific activities around life transitions (i.e., journals, guided discussions)
- Individual time for reflection (i.e., solos)

This research suggests the value of leisure experiences, specifically outdoor adventure experiences, to people who are in transition from one life stage to another. Outdoor adventure experiences may have value in providing the time and space for individuals to process the possible changes brought on by life transitions. Through involvement in outdoor adventure experiences that involve physical and emotional challenge, individuals may become more confident and competent. The activities involve being fully present and not distracted by the demands of modern life, allowing time to reflect and process. The natural environment provides an atmosphere that may clear the mind, allowing for reflection and planning (Miles, 1987). Additional intentional programming may provide specific opportunities for participants to focus on the transition. Further investigation concerning the use of outdoor adventure programming for individuals in life transitions might examine the role that adventure programming can play in the process of clarifying life purpose and direction.

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